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STATE PLEASE PASS TO INL/FO PDAS SCHWEICH

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TAGS: AF KNAR PGOV PL PREL
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR THOMAS SCHWEICH'S DECEMBER 3 MEETINGS
IN POLAND ON COUNTERACTING AFGHAN POPPY CULTIVATION.

¶11. (SBU) On 3 December, Ambassador Thomas Schweich, United States Coordinator for Afghan Counternarcotics and Justice Reform and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, briefed a roundtable of Polish government officials on the new U.S. five pillar strategy for the reduction of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. The roundtable included representatives from the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense and was organized by Jolanta Jacek, Deputy Director in the Asia-Pacific Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The GOP was engaged and keenly interested in the Ambassador's presentation.

¶12. (SBU) Ambassador Schweich spelled out the new five pillar strategy which details the U.S. plan to counteract poppy cultivation and trade in Afghanistan through: I) an improved information campaign; II) alternative economic development; III) eradication; IV) interdiction; and V) judicial reform.

¶13. (SBU) Information Campaign: The improved information campaign will focus on the use of Afghan teams to emphasize to tribal leaders the negative impact of heroin addiction on the Afghan population, Afghanistan's relationships with neighboring countries, and the contradiction between drug addiction and basic Islamic principals. This program has been implemented in Balkh with success.

¶14. (SBU) Alternative Economic Development: Alternative development encourages the introduction of more profitable alternative industries, such as fruit trees or animal husbandry. Additionally, this program will support efforts to ensure that Afghan farmers have access to markets where their crops will receive competitive prices -- for example, by shipping products to the United Arab Emirates where market prices are significantly higher than in local Afghan markets. USAID has earmarked significant funding for these programs. Also, new agricultural extension programs will provide assistance to local farmers long after initial agricultural training programs have ended.

¶15. (SBU) Eradication: While aerial eradication is the most effective and least risky means of poppy eradication, Schweich informed the GOP of the USG's recent decision to only advocate ground-based methods of eradication during the spring 2008 eradication season. At present, the largest areas of poppy cultivation are in the southern regions of Afghanistan. These are not only the wealthiest regions of Afghanistan but also form the largest base of political support for Afghan President Karzai. While the temptation for non-action on eradication in these areas is significant,

the USG wants to work with NATO allies to increase pressure on the Afghan Government's commitment to eradication. The USG advocates increased force protection for eradication teams to ensure their success and reduce the incidence of negotiated eradication, which is subject to corruption. While the United Nations believes that eradication levels must reach 20 to 25% of the poppy cultivation to provide a credible disincentive to cultivation, the current rate of eradication in Afghanistan is at 9%.

¶6. (SBU) Interdiction: The United States will offer 340 million USD in aid to support improved high-value target (HVT) prosecution capacity in Afghanistan. This is a training process that may take several years to become effective.

¶7. (SBU) Judicial Reform: Thirty newly-vetted judges and a new Counternarcotics Justice facility have already improved law enforcement, as exemplified by the 111 cases prosecuted this year. The Rome conference raised an additional 100 million USD for this effort. Nonetheless, the biggest challenges to judicial reform in Afghanistan remain the lack of Afghan political will and allied unity in pressuring Afghanistan into greater action.

¶8. (SBU) The GOP asked what the European Union can do to encourage greater Afghan cooperation on counternarcotics, how to increase cooperation and assistance levels from Afghanistan's neighbors and from Asia-Pacific nations, civilian vs. military participation in counternarcotics programs (particularly eradication), the possibility of PRT involvement in this program and the role of EUPOL. The Polish representatives also expressed their impression of lackluster EUPOL performance, and hope that this would be improving with new leadership. Because the new Polish government was just settling in, however, the Polish side did

not have many concrete proposals to offer with regard to increased Polish civilian participation in Afghanistan.

¶9. (SBU) During Embassy meetings with Warsaw-based DEA officers and LEGATT representative, Schweich discussed opportunities for improved cooperation through training. DEA proposed a joint training program for Ukrainian and Polish working-level counternarcotics officials. Ambassador Schweich urged a full proposal, indicating that there may be limited funding available for such a program. Details of a proposal will be sent septel.

¶10. INL/PDAS Schweich has cleared this cable.

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